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ABSTRACT

The Essex County College Learning Resources Center was established within a two-month period in 1968, allowing no time to train personnel, develop procedures, or do organized planning. Consequently, the Director developed a tight central leadership and decision-making system. It was decided that the organization needed a management system that would guide the organization toward pre-set goals, decentralize decision-making, provide performance standards, improve individual performance, increase motivation, and create participative management. The management by objectives (MBO) system was chosen. Staff were trained in MBO procedures. Written objectives were prepared for projects to be executed between February, 1972 and January, 1973. A scheduling board was set up to facilitate visual followup of the projects. Evaluative procedures for testing the results were also set up. Findings show that there is better planning, since department heads have to prepare objectives periodically. MBO improved the Director's performance by decentralizing his authority. Evaluation is facilitated through the wealth of quantitative and qualitative data offered by MBO. It was concluded, based on one year of testing, that MBO provided considerable administrative improvement. (KM)

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THE CHANGE OF MANAGERIAL POLICIES AT
ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER
AND INTRODUCTION OF MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES SYSTEM

by

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Introduction

The Essex County College Learning Resources Center was organized in Summer, 1968 and became operational in September of that year. The Director of the Learning Resources Center was hired on August 1, 1968, and given the task in the next two months to set up physical facilities, to acquire collection, to select and hire personnel, and to establish budgetary and administrative procedures. By the end of September, 1968 the school opened with an enrollment of 4,000 students, and from this date the Learning Resources Center started to provide services to its community. This rapid build up of an organization from nothing to a formidable division with an annual budget of approximately 400,000 dollars, and the constant pressure for increased services, created a managerial crises of considerable magnitude. The whole operation was run from day to day without long-range planning, which would enable to make most effective and economical use of manpower, equipment, facilities and money. The major activities were directed toward meeting the daily crises which put the Learning Resources Center into a situation which is generally referred to as "management by crises."

In the Fall of 1971, the Director of the Learning Resources Center decided to analyze the existing managerial system, to identify the problems, and to find satisfactory solutions, which would either rectify the present system, or replace it with a more effective one.

Identifying the Problem

A three month study of the system revealed that the major weaknesses of the organization take their origin from the mode and circumstances in which the division was formed. Because of the limited time in which the Learning Resources Center was set up, there was no time available to train personnel, develop procedures, or do organized planning. The best answer, at least during the initial organizational period, seemed to be a tight central leadership and control. In the first three years the Director of the Learning Resources Center, as the most experienced member of the managerial team, developed a centralized decision making machinery. This mode of management tends to provide immediate and visible results which give satisfaction and credit to the superior, but excludes those with whom he is working. The Director was making not only the decisions he should, but also many that could be made more soundly by others. A process of the delegation of authority had to be started, which would motivate people to plan and to decide, and to do things out of their own will and satisfaction rather than because they were told to do so. A great need arose to adopt a system which would motivate people to achievement and induce them to participate in the managerial process.

The short organizational period, and the pressures of every day work did not allow the time for development of rational performance standards. Again, a system had to be developed which would provide the data on which the standards could be based.

Until now, the individual performance was evaluated and judged by observation of the results achieved by a staff member. Because of

lack of standards, there was no measurable quantitative data available to provide a satisfactory evaluation system. There was a need for a system which would provide as a by-product quantitative and qualitative data, which would become the base for standards, enhance forecasting, and create an instrument which could be used for evaluation and improvement of performance.

After the identification of the existing problems, it was decided that another management system must be introduced, and possibly one that would deliver the following factors:

- a. Introduce a planning system which would guide the organization toward pre-set goals
- b. Decentralize decision making process
- c. Provide performance standards
- d. Improve individual performance
- e. Increase motivation to achievement
- f. Create participative management

Selection of MBO System to Solve Managerial Problems at Essex County College Learning Resources Center

After several months of study of the existing management systems, the Director of the Learning Resources Center decided to test the MBO system for possible adoption at Essex County College Learning Resources Center. This system has been known and practiced by profit making institutions for a long time. The present literature on the subject indicates great managerial success of companies which use the MBO system in their operations. What seemed to be more encouraging, was that the MBO seemed particularly successful in rectifying similar problems as faced by the Learning Resources Center. This approach seemed to be the

most proper way to improve the management procedures at the Learning Resources Center.

Executing of MBO System

The following steps have been taken to set up procedures for the execution of the project:

- a. Training of the Learning Resources Center staff in MBO procedures
- b. Preparing of written objectives for projects to be executed between February, 1972 and January, 1973
- c. Setting up of a scheduling board to facilitate visual follow-up of the projects
- d. Setting up of evaluative procedures for testing the results

Training

The heart of the MBO system are clearly defined objectives, most often stated in a written form. One of the principal tasks in the MBO training process is to teach the staff how to write meaningful and realistic objectives. The goals set must be achievable in a prescribed period of time.

[The training of the Learning Resources Center staff in preparing objectives started in February 1972. At that time the Department Heads were asked to write specific objectives for the next three months of operation. Prior to this, several lectures on the system were held and the professional staff members were asked to read the available literature on the subject. Monthly reviewing meetings were held to follow the progress and to discuss the problems.

Writing Objectives

The written objectives which are prepared every three months by the Department Heads are stated on a specifically designed form to cover the specific projects which a department undertakes in the coming three months (see Appendix I). Sometime a project extends over the three month period, which is indicated on the form. The specific objectives must be traceable to the key objectives of the Division, designed by the Director at the beginning of each academic year. The specific projects are in addition to everyday routine operations conducted inside the department. Projects like revision of the card catalog or preparing of audio-visual orientation program are considered special projects beyond everyday duties. The form on which objectives are prepared states the project title, detailed statement of objectives for the given project, the initiation and completion date, person in charge of the project, listing of human and physical resources needed for completion, and space for remarks. This form also includes entries which are filled in during the final evaluation of the project which usually takes place at the end of the three months period. At that time questions are asked if the time was gained or slippage occurred. Also, all operational problems which came to light during the duration of the project, will be carefully recorded.

Visual Planning Board

To facilitate visual evaluation of the progress made in achieving the objectives, a scheduling board was installed in the Director's office (see Appendix II). Most of the entries on the form are presented in visual form on the board; the name of the department, the title of the project, the name of the person in charge of the proj-

ect. A long colored bar indicates the period of the project. A black flag shows where the project stands at a given time. This instrument facilitates better control of the current status of the project.

Evaluating Procedures

The results are evaluated by the following methods:

- a. Through comparison of the objectives set and objectives achieved.
- b. By interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data collected during the period.
- c. By monitoring and measuring periodic progress in the projects.
- d. Collecting feedback from the Department Heads during reviewing session.
- e. Personal observation.

The Director and Department Heads hold periodic monthly meetings to review performance on the projects. Each Department Head reports progress and failures as they occurred during the month. Corrective measures are discussed for possible implementation during the remaining period of the project. At the end of the three months period, or whenever the completion date of the project falls, a full evaluation takes place. The final meeting on the project should provide information such as:

1. Was the project due on time. Was the time gained or the slippage occurred. The time differences in achievement are measured in percentages, considering the projected period of the project as 100%.
2. What problems arose. All operational problems are spelled and recorded in detail. The collected data provides a base for corrective measures.
3. How realistic the objectives were. If so, the collected data provides input for standards and is used in forecasting the measurable future goals.

4. Is the information received from the preceding measuring devices competitive with the information gathered during the personal observation of the project. If this is the case the data collected becomes valid not only in the evaluation of the project, but also in the evaluation of the whole MBO system.

Findings

The MBO system has been applied at Essex County College Learning Resources Center, since February, 1972 till the present time on a trial basis. During this time, information was gathered which points out toward a great usefulness of this system to the managerial process in the Learning Resources Center.

The fact that the Department Heads have to prepare periodically objectives, contributes to better planning in the Division. It forces them to communicate with the rest of the staff and solicit their feedback concerning planning. The Department Heads must make decisions as well as influence others to make decisions. This fact decentralizes decision-making function in the Division and contributes to more effective management through the people. Objectives become a motivating factor because the whole staff is induced to participate in the decision-making process which in turn improves the moral of people. They have more opportunity to use their own ideas and to plan and control their own work. The staff feels more responsibility for its activities which are controlled and stimulated by the objectives rather than by one central source of leadership, which till now was the Director of the Learning Resources Center.

It improved the Director's performance by decentralizing his authority. Now he knows better the decisions he should make and those that can be better made by others. The objectives establish conditions

which offer themselves to delegation of authority down the operating levels. The staff has the opportunity to make many of the decisions that relate to their own work, which takes the burden from the Director.

The system provides wealth of quantitative and qualitative data which offers solid base for evaluation of the system and the people in it. The operational shortcomings and inefficiencies are easily exposed and provide the necessary information for control and corrective measures. It creates historic data which after evaluation becomes part of the standards indispensable in efficient managerial process.

Finally, it was noted that MBO contributed to improved performance of the individual staff member, and increased production in the Departments. At each of the three month evaluation session, a higher attainment of the objectives has been recorded which of course benefited the whole operation.

Conclusion

Based on one year of testing it was concluded that the MBO system is applicable to the Learning Resources Center operations and that it can provide considerable improvement to its administration. Through its application, the major weaknesses of the previous system were eliminated. It is a logical, straight forward approach to management which integrates human and physical resources in an on going process of the achievement of certain goals. It was accepted as the prevailing management method of operation in the Learning Resources Center. It is our expectation and hope that MBO will be adopted by other divisions of the college and this way will improve the managerial capabilities of the whole institution.

ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE
LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER
PLANNING AND OBJECTIVES

Appendix 1

PERIOD

DEPARTMENT	
PROJECT TITLE	
OBJECTIVES	
INITIATION DATE	EVALUATION
COMPLETION DATE	
PERSON IN CHARGE	
RESOURCES NEEDED	
HUMAN:	
BUDGET:	STATUS: GAIN (%) SLIPPAGE (%) REASONS: CORRECTIVE ACTION
OTHER:	
REMARKS:	
REMARKS:	

